

College Board FAQ May 2021 Exam Session

Will digital AP exams be shorter than the paper and pencil exams?

No. Digital AP Exams will be the same length as traditional paper and pencil AP Exams and include both multiple-choice and free-response questions (as always, AP Computer Science Principles remains a multiple-choice-only exam and AP Seminar remains a free-response-only exam).

Can digital AP exams be taken on iPads or other tablets?

No. Digital AP Exams can only be taken on laptop and desktop computers (Mac, Windows, or school-managed Chromebook). In future years, it may be possible for students to take full-length digital AP Exams on other devices, once we confirm they can be used successfully for AP testing.

Why don't AP Exams in world language and culture, Latin, Music Theory, and Spanish Literature and Culture have a digital exam that can be taken at home?

The world language exams require translation to and from written forms of the language, which a student with a smartphone can do by holding a translation app up to the computer screen. Accordingly, there is no way to administer exams at home that assess reading and writing of another language. Last year, colleges were willing to accept an abbreviated exam that only assessed speaking skills, but this year, their preference, understandably, is that if a student can't take an AP Exam that measures reading and writing, and not just speaking, the student should take their own college's placement exam when they arrive on campus. Similarly, the AP Music Theory Exam requires sight-singing without the aid of a device such as a metronome or a musical instrument, which can't be enforced in a non-proctored setting.

How are the digital exams different from the paper and pencil exams?

The exams were designed to be as similar as possible and assess the same course content. However, there are differences related to the testing format and exam security. For example, because it's not feasible to have students draw graphs and figures online this year, students will be asked to answer questions about provided graphs and figures. Synchronous start times and restrictions on going back to previous questions are also key differences from paper and pencil exams, but important to help ensure that students don't gain unfair advantages during testing.

Will accommodations be supported on the digital exams?

Yes. Digital exams will be accessible to students with disabilities who are approved for testing accommodations. Students approved for braille accommodations will be able to test using assistive technology, and braille testing options will be available for students who are unable to test using the digital exams.

With the disruption to teaching and learning due to the pandemic, why didn't you shorten the exams or remove content coverage requirements?

In March 2020, colleges as well as high schools closed suddenly, and most were unprepared to complete their coursework through remote learning. Accordingly, the May 2020 exams covered a scope similar to the amount of content colleges covered before ending the semester early. However, this year, since most colleges are covering the full content in their courses, they expect the same of AP courses. The 2021 AP Exams must cover the full course content so that students are accurately placed into higher-level courses where they will succeed when they arrive at college. To students, the colleges they enter, and society at large, AP Exam scores must continue to accurately indicate whether millions of students have completed the college course material and should thus be exempted from learning it in college.

Does the student's computer or school-managed Chromebook need a microphone for audio recording?

No. The digital AP Exam will not activate a computer microphone or record audio at any time on exam day.